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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 013513

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: ACEH: IMPLICATIONS OF THE GAM VICTORY

REF: JAKARTA 10572

Classified By: CDA JOHN A. HEFFERN, FOR REASONS 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The surprise win of the Free Aceh Movement's (GAM) Irwandi Yusuf in Aceh's gubernatorial election is clear evidence that the province's first direct local elections were genuine and that the peace process is beginning to mature. Irwandi's win is likely to accelerate GAM's transition into a formal political party and breathe life into the GAM reintegration process. At the same time, the wide gap between GAM and Jakarta on contentious issues such as Acehese autonomy and accountability for human rights violations remains and has the potential to strain Aceh's relations with Jakarta, while Irwandi's disapproval of shariah law could reassure secularists. The way in which these questions are handled will determine the prospects for lasting peace in Aceh as well as Jakarta's estimation of the value this model of conflict resolution had for Papua or elsewhere. The effects of this election could therefore ripple across broader U.S. interests in Indonesia. End Summary.

MANDATE FOR CHANGE

¶2. (U) Although the election results are still preliminary, GAM's Irwandi Yusuf appears to have won a solid victory in Aceh's first direct local election for governor. The holding of local elections in the province was a key milestone in implementing the 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between GAM and the Government of Indonesia. Irwandi's surprise win in these elections is clear evidence that they were genuine. It also appears that GAM has won in at least five of 19 districts and that new faces are expected in another eight districts. That fewer than a third of incumbents were returned constitutes strong evidence that the Acehese were voting for change. Official results of the elections will be announced in early January.

¶3. (C) Because of his status within GAM, Irwandi's victory may advance the peace process by returning control over the movement to Aceh and easing its transition from independence movement to political party. It is also expected to accelerate and deepen the reintegration process. At the same time, his strongly held views on contentious issues such as central government authority versus Aceh's autonomy and accountability for human rights violations committed during the decades of conflict have the potential of straining relations with Jakarta.

TRANSFORMING GAM

¶4. (C) GAM has historically been controlled by a group of exiles in Sweden. Although this group successfully

negotiated the Helsinki MOU, they have subsequently refused to consider transforming the movement in ways which will advance the peace process, namely by embracing the creation of a political party. While not yet complete, the election is returning control of the movement from Sweden to Aceh and transferring it from self-appointed exiles to a democratically elected leader. According to Irwandi, he will form a political party as soon regulations are amended to permit it. Once he does, the transfer of power will be complete.

ADVANCING THE PEACE PROCESS

15. (C) One impediment to the peace process has been a lack of trust between ex-combatants and the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA) charged with implementing reintegration policy. This lack of trust delayed payments to ex-combatants and has hindered the development of programs to compensate victims of conflict. As governor, Irwandi will appoint and supervise the leadership of the BRA and will have the authority to use the province's financial and administrative muscle to accelerate reintegration and peace building programs. Humam Hamid, one of Irwandi's competitors for Governor, told us after the election that Irwandi's presence in the government and his credibility among GAM members should smooth the process of GAM reintegration.

16. (C) Irwandi is expected to aggressively promote reintegration of former GAM combatants and use the resources of the province to assist ex-combatants. It is almost certain that he will also pursue amendments to the Law on the Governing of Aceh (LOGA), including portions dealing with accountability for human rights violations, to bring it into

JAKARTA 00013513 002 OF 002

full compliance with the MOU. An aggressive approach to implementing the Helsinki MOU and modifying the LOGA are likely to strain Aceh's relationship with Jakarta.

POINTS OF CONTENTION

17. (C) The Helsinki MOU promised broad autonomy to Aceh. Indonesia has codified the autonomy in law, but Irwandi and GAM do not believe that the law goes far enough (reftel). Issues in contention include prosecution for past human rights violations, powers of the central government, control of natural resources, and the role of the military. Each of those issues is extremely sensitive and, if mishandled, could damage relations between Jakarta and Aceh and ultimately Jakarta's perception of the peace process.

18. (C) A related issue, though not directly tied to the MOU or the LOGA, is the role of Islam and shariah law. The GAM was never a proponent of shariah law, and the national government's introduction of it was an attempt to undercut independence sentiment. None of the candidates made it major a campaign issue, but Irwandi has indicated in private conversations with us that he intends to roll it back significantly. He will have to do this without alienating conservatives, but such a move could help to reassure secularists and nationalists.

COMMENT

19. (C) How well Aceh and Jakarta are able to work together in the coming year will help determine the prospects for continuing peace in Aceh. They will also determine the extent to which Jakarta will consider the Aceh peace process a success. The central government's initial response was uniformly positive, if cautious, promising to work with the winner for Aceh's recovery and reintegration. Because Jakarta's assessment of the success of this peace model will in part determine its willingness to employ a similar approach elsewhere in the archipelago, these developments could affect our broader interests in Indonesia.

HEFFERN